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HB 2591
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Statement for
House Committee on
Planning, Energy, and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing - February 16, 1988

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HB 2591 would appropriate \$85,000 to fund the development and implementation of four environmental education programs. The programs would develop public awareness and education by producing and distributing environmental information and include publications outlining environmental review procedures and the duties and functions of the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC). Public environmental awareness would be encouraged through bus posters, bumper stickers, grocery bags, newsletters, educational packets, and workshops.

This statement does not represent and institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

The importance of improving both public and agency awareness of the environment, of environmental review procedures, and the role of the Office of Environmental Quality Control is appropriately recognized by HB 2591 and we support the intent of this bill. Our comments are similar to those provided on the companion Senate Bill 2376, with a few revisions to reflect the discussion at the previous hearing.

Program (1)

As presently drafted, the scope of the public awareness campaign would include the design, production, and distribution of materials such as: (A) handbooks on environmental review procedures; (B) bus posters, bumper stickers and grocery bags; and (C) brochures on the duties and functions of the Office of Environmental Quality Control.

We strongly concur with the need for item (A) "Handbooks on the EIS review procedures." In the past, OEQC published an information handbook on Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) preparation and review procedures. An update of this handbook is long over due and would benefit those members of the community most involved in the business of preparing EIS's as well as those State and county personnel charged with the responsibility of reviewing EIS's.

Similarly, the brochures on OEQC as specified in item (C) would be helpful in pointing out OEQC's responsibilities with regard to Chapter 343 and their environmental coordinating functions.

The suggested development and distribution of bumper stickers, bus posters, grocery bags, (item B) and the development of educational materials, including curriculum, books, coloring books, games, and posters (program 3) would be educational but may be more effectively handled by the Department of Education with technical input and guidance from OEQC. Since OEQC is solely responsible for the oversight of Chapter 343 and no other agency has that responsibility, it is important that new educational directives not be undertaken at the expense of the duties required under Chapter 343, the Environmental Impact Statement law, and other functional responsibilities under HRS 341. The growth and development occurring statewide emphasizes the need for OEQC to coordinate, guide, and generally perform its statutory coordinating responsibilities as well as providing educational guidance so as to assure the adequacy of the environmental assessment procedures required by Chapter 343.

Programs (2 and 3)

The suggested publication of a newsletter is an excellent medium through which public awareness of environmental information, including provisions for public involvement, could be addressed efficiently and in a timely manner. We suggest that expansion of the present OEQC Bulletin, to include the newsletter information, might best serve the public's need and interest in current environmental events and issues in the state. Such information could include Public Hearing dates, Environmental Council meeting dates and agendas, and dates of other environmentally relevant activities. OEQC recently published "Ahupua'a", a quarterly news magazine which provides detailed environmental information to the public. Although, the initial issue of "Ahupua'a" was very informative and exceptionally well put together, a quarterly published magazine does not provide timely information. We believe it would be worthwhile for OEQC to publish both a bi-weekly newsletter of timely information in addition to the "Ahupua'a". To provide such timely and important information it is absolutely essential that OEQC have the requested personal computer system, including telecommunication capability.

Program 4

The bill proposes the holding of workshops on various environmental permit preparation and review procedures. We suggest that the workshops be directed primarily to environmental professionals and the staff of State and County agencies responsible for environmental management decisions and related documents. A single environmental review specialist with responsibility for conducting workshops combined with consultative meetings with small groups might be more useful than the suggested two or three staff members meeting twice a year. It has been our observation that environmental statutory procedures, i.e., the workings of Chapter 343 and its rules, are unclear to many people on Oahu as well as to those in remote areas.

In conclusion, we support the intent of the bill. We appreciate your consideration of our comments and we urge that every effort be made to support and encourage OEQC to meet both its EIS coordination duties under Chapter 343 as well as fulfilling its educational responsibilities.
